

WAYS AND MEANS MUST JOIN OTHERS IN OVERSIGHT OF MEDICARE PART D

Thursday, 16 February 2006

Senior Ways and Means Democratic Members Charles B. Rangel and Pete Stark today repeated their request that Chairman Thomas uphold the committee's duty and conduct oversight on Medicare Part D. Previous requests have been delivered to Health Subcommittee Chairman Johnson and Full Committee Chairman Thomas in June and October of 2005 respectively.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, February 17, 2006

CONTACT: Yoni Cohen (202) 225-3202

WAYS AND MEANS MUST JOIN OTHERS IN OVERSIGHT OF MEDICARE PART D

WASHINGTON, D.C.

– Senior Ways and Means Democratic Members Charles B. Rangel and Pete Stark today repeated their request that Chairman Thomas uphold the committee's duty and conduct oversight on Medicare Part D. Previous requests have been delivered to Health Subcommittee Chairman Johnson and Full Committee Chairman Thomas in June and October of 2005 respectively.

Despite repeated requests and growing public concern over the Part D enactment, Chairman Thomas has yet to exercise the Ways and Means Committee's responsibility to oversee the troubled program. A number of other Congressional Committees have held or scheduled oversight hearings on Part D - see list below.

The following is the text of the letter delivered to Chairman Thomas earlier today:

February 17, 2006

The Honorable Bill Thomas

Chairman

Committee on Ways and Means

1102 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thomas:

On behalf of Committee Democrats, we are writing once again to request that the Committee on Ways and Means schedule a series of hearings to oversee implementation of the new Medicare prescription drug program.

At virtually every Health Subcommittee hearing last year, Democrats asked for oversight hearings on Part D. In addition, as you know, Democrats on the Health Subcommittee wrote to Mrs. Johnson last June asking for hearings. Because there was no response, several of us wrote to you in October, 2005 raising concerns about Part D issues that fall under several different subcommittee and requesting hearings. Again, there has been no response.

Thus, you can imagine our surprise when we saw that the Committee's "views and estimates" letter which was considered yesterday indicates that the Committee will "continue its efforts to oversee implementation" of the prescription drug program. This language is nearly identical to language in last year's letter, but it is striking given that the Committee has held 59 hearings thus far in the 109th Congress, including 14 hearings on health care issues, and yet not a single hearing on the prescription drug program.

Every other Committee with even a tangential relationship to Medicare has either scheduled hearings or announced their intention to do so (see enclosure). It is embarrassing to us that the Committee on Ways and Means is failing to uphold its duties. Indeed, it would appear to an outside observer that the Committee is in denial with respect to the problems facing so many of our constituents.

We hope you will reconsider and schedule an aggressive series of balanced hearings this Spring. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Charles B. Rangel

Pete Stark

Ranking Democrat

Ranking Democrat

Subcommittee on Health

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG OVERSIGHT HEARINGS

as of February 17, 2006

* Committee on Ways and Means

N/A

* Committee on Energy and Commerce

March 1, 2006 (scheduled)

* Senate Finance Committee

February 8, 2006

September 14, 2004

* Senate Special Committee on Aging

February 2, 2006

March 3, 2005

* Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs,
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and
International Security

September 22, 2005